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Public Profiles, Private Parties: Digital Ethnography, Ethics and Research in the Context of Web 2.0

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Introduction

This chapter explores some of the ethical challenges posed by digital ethnography as an innovative methodology for conducting online research. Digital ethnography shares many of the principles of traditional (offline) ethnography, including an ethnographic commitment to understanding participants' lives and experiences through observation and active participation (Hine, 2000). One of a number of virtual ethnographic approaches, digital ethnography can be distinguished from other approaches by its focus on the intersection of digital technologies with the Internet. Ease of access to a ready and rich body of data, and an active understanding of the meanings of everyday digital practices for research participants, are some of the key advantages of digital ethnography. However, as we will demonstrate, this convenience also acts as a disadvantage as it entails the negotiation of a number of complex ethical issues. While debates about the ethical aspects of conducting research online have taken place since the development of the first Internet browsers in the mid-90s (Naughton, 2000), a significant shift has occurred in the online practices of Internet users, and the ways in which the Internet itself has shaped these practices in the last decade. In particular, the advent of Web 2.0 has further muddled existing ethical concerns about overt and covert observation, blurred distinctions between the public and the private, complicated the question of informed consent and data protection, and thrown open questions about the authorship and ownership of data (Snee, 2008).

The chapter begins by providing a slightly fuller account of the issues described above in order to contextualize some of the key ethical challenges, and the advantages and disadvantages of digital ethnography in the context of Web 2.0. This account highlights tensions between existing ethical guidelines for research conducted online and the specific issues raised by Web 2.0. The discussion is situated by data from recent research which used a combination of traditional and digital ethnographic methods to explore how young people

negotiate different forms of marketing, branding and ‘managed consumption’ in two significant youth leisure sites, namely: music festivals and free parties (illegal raves). We outline how the initial netnographic (Kozinets, 2002b) analysis of festival and free party web forums developed into a fuller consideration of the creation and sharing of digital content online, the significance of this for festival and free party-goers and the ethical issues raised thereby. We also discuss the use of social networking sites by free party networks and the nuanced nature of public and private (Lange, 2008) on these sites. Given that young people are the biggest users of Web 2.0 platforms such as social networking and media sharing sites we argue that it is important for researchers to establish a set of benchmark criteria for engaging with these platforms ethically. One suggestion is to look to the ways in which issues such as privacy, and attribution and redistribution of content, are already being dealt with in and across Web 2.0 platforms.

Ethics and the Internet

Concerns about ethical aspects of online research have been voiced since the earliest use of the Internet by the general populace in the mid-90s (Naughton, 2000). In 1996 the journal *The Information Society* published a special issue on online ethics entitled *The Ethics of Fair Practices for Collecting Social Sciences Data in Cyberspace* (Thomas, 1996). Contributions to this special issue identified a number of ethical issues which continue to inform guidelines about the ethical conduct of online research today. With respect to the social sciences a leading set of institutional guidelines for online research in the social sciences are those put in place by the British Psychological Society (BPS). The guidelines, *Conducting Research on the Internet: Guidelines for ethical practice in psychological research online* (2007) identify a number of ethical issues all broadly related to the levels of ‘identifiability’ and ‘observation’ of research participants (BPS, 2007). In brief, the Society’s main concerns are, firstly, with the verifiability of identity – how do we know whether the participants are who we think they are? Secondly, how do we assess what is public and what is private space online? A current ethical stipulation of the BPS is that “unless consent has been sought, observation of public behaviour needs to take place only where people would ‘reasonably expect to be observed by strangers’” (BPS, 2007: 3). This question therefore hinges on what participants’ expectations of privacy online might be, so that postings to online forums or message boards cannot automatically be regarded as public activity. A third concern is with obtaining consent from participants when observing them online or collecting data from their

online activity. Fourthly, participants should not be deceived as part of the research. The guidelines state that for qualitative online research deception is most likely to be related to researchers becoming members of chat rooms or discussion groups in order to ‘lurk’ and collect data. The final two concerns are with the preservation of participant anonymity (both on paper and online), and with the storage and ongoing use of participants’ personal data which should only occur if they have consented to the use of this data. The BPS (2007) acknowledges that many decisions about ethics will depend on the research design being used, and that the constant and accelerating rate of change in computer mediated communication makes it impossible to anticipate all of the ethical issues that might occur. However, we argue that these guidelines fail to take into account the sea change in the practices of Internet users, and in the very nature of communication on the Internet itself. In the section below we outline some of the central features of this shift before going on to discuss some of the ethical challenges posed thereby.

Mediated lives: ‘new’ media, social media and Web 2.0

According to Murthy (2008: 849) “day-to-day life is becoming increasingly technologically mediated”. For many people everyday reality is filtered through the use of a number of now-mundane devices such as mobile phones, mp3 players, digital cameras, and wireless laptops. Developments in technology have meant that these devices are increasingly integrated (for instance mobile phones can now function as phones, cameras, music players and Web browsers) and networked, thus making it easier for people to upload and share aspects of their lives online. Consequently, Puri (2007: 388) argues, the Internet is “becoming a place where people live a part of their lives”, while Negroponte (in Flew, 2002: 12) states that “Computing is not about computing anymore, it is about living”. This uploading and sharing of daily life – via status updates, tweets, photos, videos etc. – is enabled and radically expanded by the shift from a top-down, read-only Web to a fundamentally participatory and, above all, social Web. boyd (2009) states that the social web is enabled by a “collection of software that [allows] individuals and communities to gather, communicate, share, and in some cases collaborate or play”. The notion of a set of software or online applications and platforms that are used socially is one of the defining characteristics of Web 2.0 – or what has been referred to as the second, *participatory* phase of the Internet (Anderson, 2007).

O'Reilly Media Inc., an American media conglomerate, first used the term Web 2.0 in 2004 to refer to a new set of online services and technologies that fulfilled a primarily social purpose (Beer and Burrows, 2007; Snee, 2008). Anderson (2007) characterises these services as working to “facilitate a more socially connected Web where everyone is able to add to and edit the information space” (Anderson, 2007: 195). Examples of Web 2.0 platforms include blogging and micro-blogging sites (Twitter); Web forums and message boards; media-sharing sites (You Tube, Flickr); virtual reality sites (Second Life); social networking sites (Facebook, MySpace, Bebo); social bookmarking sites (Delicious); and mash-up sites (Google Earth). While the use of such platforms is not ubiquitous several popular Web 2.0 sites account for a large percentage of all Internet traffic. Hitwise UK's¹ list of the 20 most visited websites for the week ending 16 October 2010 ranked the social networking site Facebook 2nd (just below Google) accounting for 7.53% of all Internet traffic that week. The media sharing site You Tube ranked 4th, accounting for 2.24% of traffic, while photo sharing site Flickr ranked 8th in the top ten entertainment websites for the same period. A brief look at Facebook's own user engagement statistics for October 2010 (<http://www.facebook.com>) reveals that the 500 million active users of the site share more than 30 million pieces of content (web links, news stories, blog posts, notes, photo albums, etc.) each month. Sites such as Facebook therefore enable a radical extension of the digital media we have at our fingertips, allowing this media to be shared, commented on, reproduced and remixed by a vast (and growing) audience.

Researching the Social Web

A number of disciplines are now starting to respond to the massive uptake of digital and social media and what is seen as a changing social fabric as a result of these (Beer and Burrows, 2007). The increased use of technology, and the increased amount of time spent online, has correspondingly brought about a number of changes in the ways in which everyday lives and stories can be ethnographically studied. The discipline of ethnography has

¹ Experian Hitwise collect data from Internet Service Providers in order to analyse national and global trends in Internet traffic and to calculate the market share of websites.

seen the emergence of a number of distinct but related approaches to online research including hypermedia and multimodal ethnography (Mason & Dicks, 2001; Dicks, Soyinka & Coffey, 2006); cyberethnography (Teli, Pisanu & Hakken, 2007); netnography or Webnography (Kozinets, 2002b; Puri, 2007) and digital ethnography (Murthy, 2008). Digital ethnography can be distinguished from other virtual approaches by its focus on the intersection of everyday digital technologies with the Internet. Sharing the same principles as traditional, offline, ethnography, digital ethnography upholds the ethnographic commitment to understand participant's lives and experiences through observation, engagement and participation (Hine, 2000). Consequently, Murthy (2008: 838) argues that "as ethnography goes digital, its epistemological remit remains much the same ... telling social stories". A key advantage of digital ethnography is, therefore, that through its engagement with new and digital media it not only provides researchers with access to rich, diverse and ready bodies of data, but also enables an exploration of the ways in which research participants make use of a variety of everyday digital technologies to construct and share meaningful experiences and identities online. However, it is this very convenience and access to the often-private aspects of participant's lives that poses the greatest challenge to researchers using this approach as it entails the negotiation of a number of complex ethical issues. However, Murthy (2008) states that while ethics will be one of the key areas by which social science's engagement with new and digital media technologies will be judged, professional bodies and methodological literatures remain ambiguous on their treatment of the subject.

Ethics and the Social Web

The ethos of the social web is informed by two significant cultural shifts: a radical erosion of the boundaries between the public and the private, and the move to active participation in, and creation of, online content. These, in turn, give rise to corresponding ethical dilemmas for researchers. Snee (2008: 3) states that "personal lives are increasingly exposed in Web 2.0 applications as part of a broader cultural shift towards openness and changing notions of privacy". Many Web 2.0 platforms involve the sharing of personal information as the basis of membership and belonging – for example, social networking and micro-blogging sites in which users update their profiles and post updates on what they are doing. In this regard profiles on social networking sites (and sometimes on other sites such as media sharing sites or Web forums) represent a considerable investment (in time, energy, creative and emotional

labour) in that they require constant updating and fine-tuning in order to present a stable and desirable identity to online friends, acquaintances and, increasingly, strangers. boyd (2009) and Lange (2008) argue that previously dichotomised versions of private and public – distinctions based on the hidden versus the open, or the individual versus the collective – are confounded by practices and expectations around the sharing of information on Internet sites. Nissenbaum (in Lange, 2008) introduces the concept of contextual integrity to account for the expectations that people have about the collection and distribution of information in different contexts. However, Lange (2008: 364) extends this argument by arguing for the recognition of nuanced versions of public and private *within* particular contexts – she refers to such nuances as the “fractalisation of the public and private”. Lange (2008: 364) argues that this fractalisation is evidenced by the way in which users of social networking sites employ the “technical and social affordances” of such sites to manipulate and negotiate access to content on sites.

The second significant cultural shift is the shift towards user generated content and active participation and collaboration in the production, recycling and remixing of online content (Anderson, 2007; Snee, 2008). Web 2.0 largely embraces the move towards Open Access content and Anderson (2007: 14) argues that this entails a change in the way in which data is viewed, which is increasingly as a resource that “can be repurposed, reformatted and reused”. This change in perception and practice, Anderson (2007) argues, can be compared to the DIY ethos associated with Punk in which young people took control of the production and promotion of their own entertainment and content by forming bands and writing fanzines etc. Consequently, people now see themselves as the creators of, and experts on, the online representations of their experiences and identities and Anderson (2007: 15) argues that this poses a significant challenge to perceptions of “who has the authority to ‘say’ and ‘know’”.

The discussion above highlights some of the tensions between existing ethical guidelines for research conducted online and the kinds of ethical dilemmas introduced by Web 2.0. In summary, the shift towards making the private public suggests that identity online is currently less about experimentation (i.e. Turkle, 1995) and more akin to Giddens’s (1991) notion of identity as an ongoing and reflexive project. The frequent recycling and repurposing of data on Web 2.0 complicates ethical concerns about the verifiability of identity and data protection and skews these so that a new set of concerns is raised about how to negotiate

authorship and ownership of content that could be used as data. We now go on to unpack some of the ethical challenges and dilemmas we faced in relation to accessing and using the (very different) online content of festival and free party participants in our research.

Researching Festivals and Free Parties Online

The research study forming the backdrop to this chapter, *Negotiating managed consumption: Young people, branding and social identification processes* (ESRC RES-061-25-0129), employed an innovative combination of qualitative methodologies to explore how young adults negotiated different forms of marketing, branding and ‘managed consumption’ in two youth leisure sites, namely, music festivals and free parties, and how this impacted on their social identities and networks. Music festivals were selected as examples of youth leisure events that are highly branded, with substantial levels of commercial involvement and relatively managed and regulated forms of consumption on offer. The last five years have seen a dramatic increase both in the number of music festivals – over 500 festivals took place in the UK in 2008 – as well as in the corporate branding of music festivals (Porter, 2006). Corporate festival organisers draw on the significance of festivals to British youth culture and the subcultural capital (Thornton, 1995) embodied in the notion of a festival as a ‘free’ space away from the dominant symbolic frameworks that structure everyday life to manufacture an ‘authentic’ experience and to construct the festival space as a cultural site in which participants’ ‘authentic’ selves can be expressed (Lea, 2006; Purdue, Jowers & O’Doherty, 1997). The festival industry has a significant online presence with numerous commercially driven websites dedicated to the promotion and marketing of festivals, as well as websites and forums run by and for festival-goers.

Free Parties, by contrast, involve minimal commercial involvement in the form of sponsorship or branding, and have a history of dissent and opposition to the consumerist ethos of more ‘mainstream’ music-related leisure events. In the aftermath of the legislation against and criminalisation of free festivals (the Public Order Act, 1986) and raves (the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, 1994) recent years have seen something of a resurgence of unauthorized music events in the form of the British ‘free party’ scene (Morris, 2006; Lewis, 2006). Free parties are unregulated, illegal, outdoor parties or urban squat parties during which members of party crews set up mobile sound systems to play amplified repetitive beats such as techno, hard house, drum & bass and psy-trance, usually over the course

of a weekend (Riley, Griffin & Morey, 2010). There is an emphasis on dancing, hedonism and the use of recreational drugs (Riley, Morey & Griffin, 2008). Traditionally the date, time and location of free parties has been a closely kept secret, with information passed on to trusted members of the network, or accessed via party lines (anonymous telephone numbers using recorded messages to impart information about directions to party locations) closer to the time of the event. While the non-commercial, illegal and secretive nature of free parties means that there is less of an online infrastructure around them, free parties and free party networks have a significant presence on the Internet, albeit one that is radically divided in relation to the use of Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 platforms.

The research design involved two stages – one for each case study. The first stage of each case study involved a netnographic analysis (Kozinets, 2002a) of various web forums to explore whether and how participants were talking about the commercial aspects of festivals and free parties, as well as to identify key discourses involved in the representation of these events online. However, it was during this first stage of the research that we realised the full significance of online representations and constructions of festival and free party experiences, which extended well beyond web forums and included the use of a number of Web 2.0 platforms including media sharing sites (Flickr, You Tube); virtual map sites (Google Earth); and social networking sites (Facebook, MySpace). In the section below we discuss the use of these platforms, focusing on the differing use of web forums by festival and free party-goers, as well as the move from web forums to social networking sites, and the implications thereof, for free party-goers.

Festivals online: a year-round experience

There are a number of well-used festival web forums where current and prospective festival-goers can communicate with each other by posting or commenting on a variety of threads (topics) ranging from talk about aspects of particular festivals (the line-up, tickets, anticipation, memories) to talk about the generic aspects of festivals (camping, organising lifts etc). Festival forums can be read by anyone with access to the Internet, however registration and membership, by means of setting up a personal profile with a verified email address, is required in order to post or comment on a topic. Typically profiles require a username with the option of adding an avatar (a small representative graphic such as a picture or photo) and information about age, gender and location. Email addresses can be set to

private (no email can be received from other members) or, if preferred, members can be emailed or messaged via ‘click here to email me’ or ‘send me a message’ icons. Members can also display email addresses and URLs for blogs or websites openly should they wish to. While most members’ usernames are different from their own, our feeling is that such names are largely chosen to signal a certain affiliation or identification, or to make a personal statement to fellow forum members rather than as a means of disguising identity. We found that forum usernames were often consistent across a number of platforms, so that it was possible to read a member’s posts on the forum, find and view their photos on Flickr, and find and watch their videos on You Tube. Unlike other types of forums in which communication is primarily text-based, festival forums are replete with (embedded or linked) identifiable media such as photos and videos. These can be uploaded prior to an event, as part of the preparation for, and anticipation of, the festival; taken during the festival and uploaded from the site; or edited after the festival and shared with forum members (and anyone else who cares to see them). A familiar forum topic that is often revived in the run-up to festivals concerns the organisation of collective camp sites by forum members. The chosen camp site is identified and located through the use of a distinctive tent flag which is photographed and uploaded onto the forum for the benefit of other interested parties. In a similar vein many forum members create their own tent and stage flags and upload photographs of these to the forum prior to festivals. One remarkable and unanticipated use of the forums prior to festivals was the creation and sharing of festival site maps. This practice ranged from the adaptation and editing of official maps to reflect personal preferences (for example, maps pin-pointing the position of bars selling ale on-site), to the creation of entirely new types of maps (contour maps showing the best places to camp should it rain). One example is the creation and sharing of the *Glastonbury Festival 2003 - Memory Map* (see below). The map – which appeared on a forum thread of shared maps of the Glastonbury festival site – is part of a forum member’s photostream on the photo-sharing site Flickr. The map consists of an annotated aerial photograph of the 2003 festival site. By hovering a mouse over the different stages and areas on the onscreen image a series of text boxes appear, each with a comment by different festival-goers. The memory map can be seen as an example of a digital mash-up – a piece of digital media that combines different kinds of media (in this case text and image) in order to create a new work.

[Insert here] *Glastonbury Festival 2003 - Memory Map by Luke Robinson*
(<http://www.flickr.com/photos/mortalcoil/9298831/>)

Other commonplace examples of mash-ups are to be found on You Tube. Many festival goers edit together music, video, photos and text to create films of their festival experiences. Arguably the sharing of different kinds of media, both within and outside of festival forums, signals the importance of both the individual and collective experience of festivals. Festival forums and media sharing sites such as Flickr and You Tube enable a radical extension of festivals from events taking place in a field and lasting for a few days, to the year-round celebration, re-living, and anticipation of festivals online. Furthermore, this social construction of festivals online engenders a sense of the co-creation and co-ownership of the festival experience both on and offline, and outside of the domain of sponsors and organisers. A final point to raise in this section is that we are able to make use of the image above because Flickr allows members to licence their content using a set of licensing benchmarks known as the Creative Commons (CC). Springing from the Open Content ethos of Web 2.0 Creative Commons licenses are a set of four flexible permissions for how digital and online content can be used by others. These permissions, which can be used singly or in conjunction with each other, range from the attribution of content at the most permissive side of the scale to stipulations that content must be attributed, that the user is similarly obliged to share their own content, and that the content can only be used for non-commercial purposes and in its present (verbatim) state at the least permissive side of the scale.

Free Parties: from forums to social networks

In contrast to festival forums, communication on free party forums is largely text-based with an emphasis on containing and restricting the exchange of information to well-known and trusted forum members. We explored two established and well known free party forums, one of which has been active since 1997 and was set up in response to the banning of raves by the Criminal Justice Bill in 1994. As with festival forums, posts can be read by anyone but posting and commenting require registration and membership. Forum members have usernames and avatars however these are not generally consistent across platforms. There is a shared (and probably correct) consensus on free party forums that they are monitored by the police, hence extreme caution is exercised when it comes to posting information about the dates or locations of forthcoming free parties and party lines. Suspicion and often downright

hostility are shown towards requests for, or sharing of, such information. For example, on one forum a ‘sticky’ (an important post or thread always kept at the top of the list of threads) originally posted in 2005 warns forum members to think before they type and a ‘newbie’ requesting information about local free parties is told, in no uncertain terms, that no-one is likely to share that information with him until he is known and trusted. Other requests for party line numbers are met with contempt and identified and disparaged as veiled attempts by the ‘OB’ (Old Bill, police) to gain information.

However, despite the continued, if dwindling, use of free party forums, the manner in which information about free parties is disseminated has also undergone some radical changes over the past six years, particularly with the advent of social networking sites such as MySpace and, in particular, Facebook. There is however a marked difference between group and individual free party profiles on Facebook, as well as a difference in the ways in which information is shared within such profiles. Many free party networks or sound systems have set up group (rather than individual) profiles on Facebook, and while requests to join some groups are vetted by group administrators, many can be joined by anyone with a Facebook account. Group pages often serve to promote the legal events and activities of free party networks on their profile page, while making use of the personal message system to send information about forthcoming illegal events to group members. After joining a number of these groups we received a message with information about the 2008 UK May Day Teknival (a big event on the free party calendar in which multiple sound systems from across the country come together over the May Day bank holiday) including a party line to ring for details about the location. While this information is, in some senses, shared privately – rather than broadcast publically – the relative ease of becoming a member, and the amount of information freely shared between all, including new and unfamiliar members, means that privacy is extremely permeable in such groups.

Individual Facebook profiles and accounts allow for a more complex restriction of information whereby a range of privacy settings may be tweaked to display different levels of personal or identifying information to different friends. The amount of identifiable information and media content shared on individual free party profiles varied from user to user. Some users displayed virtually no identifiable information about themselves on their profile pages, choosing to share information via personal messages to people on their friend

lists; others shared a lot of identifiable information, including videos and photos as well as links to media on other websites. Interestingly we found that ‘friending’ practices with free party-goers on Facebook occurred differently to the ways in which these practices generally occur with other users. It has been argued (Lampe, Ellison, & Steinfield, 2006) that on the whole Facebook users generally search for or ‘friend’ existing friends and acquaintances. However, we found that many free party users had large numbers of friends and that many of these friends formed part of a larger network of free party-goers and enthusiasts. We made use of both an individual profile (that included information about the lead authors’ research interests as well as a link to the project’s website), as well as setting up a group page which stated its purpose as the collection of information about sound systems and linked back to the individual profile. We found that our group page was unsuccessful in terms of collecting information or recruiting participants. However, using the individual profile we found that we were able to ‘friend’ many other free party users and in this way we were able to access a wide range of information about events. The importance of being friends with a wider, visible (virtually anyway) and familiar network of free party people on Facebook was evidenced when one user challenged my friend request, asking who I was. I replied that we had a Facebook ‘friend’ (someone I was familiar with from previous research on the free party scene but did not know personally) in common, that I had seen this person’s name on our mutual friend’s ‘friend list’, and that I thought their name and avatar looked interesting. I also said that I was interested in the regional free party scene. Thereafter my request was accepted and I was encouraged to attend forthcoming parties. Arguably, trust on free party social network profiles is less about delineating the public and private – profiles are often a mix of both – and more about a perception of like-mindedness and the recognition of a similar or familiar friendship profile.

Concluding Comments: An Ethical Commons?

Web 2.0 platforms provide digital ethnographers with a ready body of rich and diverse data. However existing ethical guidelines, which we argue do not adequately engage with the complexities of the Web 2.0 environment, make it difficult for researchers to make decisions about how to work with this data. Investment in the construction and maintenance of personal profiles render binaries such as overt and covert observation somewhat redundant, along with questions about the verifiability of identity. Moreover, the fundamentally shared nature of

content on Web 2.0 – so that once any text, photo, video, or hyperlink is displayed online it becomes subject to being forwarded, downloaded, remixed or uploaded elsewhere – means that it becomes very difficult to ascertain whose consent is required for the use of data. The affordances and features of social networking sites allow users to manipulate privacy settings, however, the primarily social function of these sites means that they are nevertheless often very permeable and that information has a tendency to leak from them. In this regard, friending practices, including the increased exposure of personal and private information and sharing of content, significantly muddy a range of ethical issues around identifying what is public and what is private, obtaining informed consent, deception and lurking. Expectations about privacy, about what is revealed and hidden and what is shared, differ significantly between users of different platforms, as well as between users of the same platforms bearing out Lange's (2008) arguments about the fractalisation, and extremely nuanced nature of public and private on Web 2.0 spaces.

Beer and Burrows (2007) argue that in order to react to the changing social fabric being wrought by Web 2.0, researchers will have to

become part of the collaborative cultures of Web 2.0, we will need to build our own profiles, make some flickering friendships, expose our own choices, preferences and views, and make ethical decisions about what we reveal and the information we filter out of these communities and into our findings.

This will require an extensive revision of existing ethical guidelines so that they are able to engage with collaborative cultures. Furthermore, given that young people are the biggest users of Web 2.0 platforms such as social networking and media sharing sites we argue that it is important for researchers to establish a set of benchmark criteria for engaging with these platforms ethically. The ethos of bodies such as the Creative Commons and the Open Commons suggest that it is trust and transparency, rather than confidentiality, that are valued in Web 2.0.

(i) additional methodological literature of relevance

Murthy, D. (2008). Digital ethnography: An examination of the use of new technologies for social research. *Sociology*, 42(5): 837-855. This paper provides a good discussion of digital ethnography as part of an overview of the use of new digital technologies for social research.

The paper examines the use of four new technologies including: online questionnaires, digital video, social networking sites and blogs.

Bober, M. (2004). Virtual youth research: an exploration of methodologies and ethical dilemmas from a British perspective. In E.A. Buchanan (Ed) *Readings in virtual research ethics: issues and controversies*. London: Information Science Publishing. This chapter discusses some of the ethical challenges facing researchers studying young people's use of the Internet, situated in a British context. The chapter provides an overview of different methodologies for online research including participant observation and the construction of the author's own teenage website in order to perform a 'technobiography'.

(ii) other examples of youth research which cover similar terrain.

The Digital Ethnography Working Project at Kansas State University makes use of digital technology – particularly video – to explore the ways in which society and culture are effected by social media. Project leader, Michael Wesch, and his students have produced an inspiring series of videos on topics ranging from Web 2.0 (*Web 2.0 ... The Machine is Us/ing Us*) to You Tube (*An Anthropological Introduction to You Tube*) which can be found on the project's website (<http://mediatedcultures.net/mediatedculture.htm>).

Ito, M.; Horst, H.; Bittanti, M.; boyd, d.; Herr-Stephenson, B.; Lange, P.; Pascoe, C.J.; & Robinson, L. (2009). *Living and Learning with New Media Summary of Findings from the Digital Youth Project*. Massachusetts: MIT Press. A report summarizing the findings from a three-year ethnographic study into young people's participation in new media.

boyd, D. (2008). Why Youth ♥ Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life. In D. Buckingham (Ed), *The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Media and Learning*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. This paper uses on and offline ethnographic methods to examine young people's use of social network sites and how this impacts on identity formation and peer sociality.

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